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THE DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES BEFORE 1870

In 1850 the census enumerators found 2,065,487 persons of European birth in the United States. Ten years later the number was 3,803,201; and in 1870 it reached 4,935,909. While these figures are without doubt only approximately correct, it is believed that the approximation is close. Widely different forces had been in play to draw this vast multitude from Europe; religion, politics, the difficulty of winning a livelihood, the love of adventure, or complex personal motives had predominated with the different individuals that composed it; but a single force, or rather a single group of forces, determined their geographical distribution in America, and these forces were economic. It cannot be denied, indeed, that there were among the immigrants a few in possession of sufficient wealth to select a home without reference to the opportunity it afforded for increasing their income, but they were so few as to be negligible. Forty years ago, moreover, a leisure class hardly existed in America, and life offered little attraction to men without an occupation; even of the few, therefore, who did not need to work for a living the greater part entered the business, and sought the region where their tastes and faculties might best be exercised.

Civil and religious rights were much the same throughout the Union, and such differences as were found among the states seem to have played little part in determining the settlement of the foreign born. Thus in 1840 Illinois and Michigan were the only states where aliens were permitted to vote; and although in that year the right was withdrawn in Illinois, under a decision of the state Supreme Court,¹ the change did not check the influx of immigrants; while on the other hand Michigan, where the privilege was still vouchsafed to them, received no considerable number of foreigners for nearly a decade.²

¹ *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 14.

² *Immigration Commission, Community Report*, Grand Rapids, MS, 12 ff.

Nor do the attitude and sentiment of the natives appear to have influenced the migrations of the immigrants. The people of New England near the end of the seventeenth century had been severely reproved by Earl Bellomont for their refusal to welcome the "gentle and profitable strangers" that might have been drawn thither from France; in the subsequent century they had been bitterly hostile to the French Canadians and coldly repellant in their treatment of such Scotch-Irish as attempted to settle there; in the nineteenth century their traditional attitude was maintained, and they manifested more dislike for foreigners than did the people of any other region;¹ yet none the less did French Canadians and Irish Catholics as well as other aliens make themselves at home among them. Social "recognition" and friendly intercourse on equal terms with Americans were seldom expected and not very hotly desired; and immigrants in search of a home, so long as they were free from actual maltreatment, were not often deterred by the attitude of the natives.

Nor was their distribution greatly influenced by the widely varying intellectual advantages afforded by different regions. Few men who lived for art, literature, or philosophy left Europe for America: the tendency for obvious reasons was rather in the opposite direction. Some, indeed, came who lived by, rather than for, intellectual pursuits; but like men of humbler vocation they chose a residence with a view to material rather than spiritual advantages. A distinguished member of this class was Francis Lieber, who retained his professorship for twenty-two years in Columbia, South Carolina, though he wrote of the place in his letters as being well nigh an intellectual desert. In addition to such men there were many others with keen appreciation of the higher manifestations of civilization, but they were under the necessity of subordinating spiritual pleasures to material ends, and they settled where they could make a living. Men of this class gave aid, not seldom indeed they led, in reclaiming to civilization the sordid communities in which their lives had fallen. The nation owes a debt of gratitude to Germans and other aliens who helped to cultivate in such interior towns as Cincinnati, St. Louis, or Milwaukee, an appre-

¹ Maguire, *The Irish in America*, 637.

ciation of art, music, literature, and philosophy. But it was not as missionaries of culture that these men crossed the mountains; they merely followed the hope of pecuniary profit that led men of lower nature than themselves along the same routes from the Atlantic. It is significant of the relatively slight importance the immigrants attached to cultural advantages that they were poor patrons of the public schools. Thus in 1850 of the children between five and fifteen years the percentage at school was 80.81 for natives and only 51.73 for those of foreign-born parents.¹ Twenty years later there were 546,317 children of alien parentage between five and eighteen, and only 43.02 per cent of them were at school.²

To the overwhelming majority of immigrants, whatever their motive might have been in leaving Europe, the prime consideration in selecting an abiding-place was economic opportunity. Their distribution in the United States would, therefore, depend upon their knowledge of the region where opportunity lay, their possession of ability or capital to develop the kind of opportunity presented, and their means of reaching the region of promise.

Few immigrants made their way into the great and fertile section where slavery prevailed. In the fifteen slave states the Europeans in 1850 numbered 298,711, or 14.46 per cent of all Europeans in the United States. In 1860 the number was 573,131 and the percentage 15.07; and in 1870 number and percentage were respectively 542,720 and 10.99. From a half to two-thirds of these were found in the border states, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. The only other slave state which received a considerable number was Louisiana, and there they were mainly congregated in the busy port of New Orleans. Thus if we deduct the number of European immigrants enumerated in Missouri, Maryland, and Kentucky and the city of New Orleans for the year 1860 from the total number in the slave states at that time—and it will be noticed that the percentage was then greater than in 1850 or 1870—we find that less than 5.68 per cent of the Europeans then in the United States were living in that region. Many of these were settled in the counties of Virginia and Texas to which slavery had not penetrated; and

¹ De Bow, *Compendium of the Seventh Census*, 150.

² *Compendium of the Ninth Census*, 452, 453.

most of the others were in the larger cities and towns. In the agricultural districts with a considerable Negro population European immigrants were so rare as to be negligible. Irish laborers composed the greater part of those in the southern towns, and outnumbered two or three to one the German shopkeepers and artisans. Thus in 1860 there were in Richmond, Va., 2,244 Irish and 1,623 Germans; in Charleston, S.C., 3,263 Irish and 1,944 Germans; in Memphis, Tenn., 4,159 Irish and 1,412 Germans; in Savannah, Ga., 3,145 Irish and 771 Germans; in Mobile, Ala., 3,307 Irish and 1,276 Germans.

Several causes contributed to the avoidance of this region. To the races that were coming from Europe the climate in the greater part of the South was not only disagreeable but dangerous. Dr. Grund, for some years professor at Harvard, said in his *Handbook* for immigrants in 1846 that a half or more of those reaching the South in summer died; and though this was probably an exaggeration, other writers concurred in general statements with regard to the unhealthfulness of the climate and the great mortality among new settlers.¹ The misery entailed by the attempt of the Mainzer Fürstenverein to plant a colony in Texas, in 1844, did much to foster in Germany a dread of the southern climate. When Frederic Law Olmstead subsequently visited the settlements that had their origin at that time, he found them prosperous and happy; but the wretchedness of their early years, though it was chiefly due to the mismanagement of leaders and the unfitness of settlers, was widely attributed to the climate, and did much to check the growth of population.²

Another deterrent to immigration to the South was the Negro. Quite aside from the fact that the Negroes were slaves, their presence in a community was a serious obstacle to the settlement there of Europeans. In some measure, this was due to race prejudice. The Irish showed an inveterate dislike of the Negro;³ and the Germans, while reprobating slavery, objected strongly to the

¹ Grund, *Handbuch und Wegweiser für Auswanderer*, 29; Brauns, *Amerika und die Moderne Völkerwanderung*, 83; Büchele, 575; Straten-Ponthoz, 79.

² Lehmann, *Die Deutsche Auswanderung*, 32 ff.

³ *Edinburgh Review*, C. 154.

Negroes as neighbors.¹ This prejudice was much strengthened by the contempt the Negroes almost universally felt and expressed for "white niggers," as they dubbed white men who lived by manual toil; for the immigrant laborer was then, as he is today, far more sensitive to the taunts of his inferiors than to abuse or maltreatment at the hands of a class he considers superior to himself.

But while climate, race prejudice, and hostility to the institution of slavery were not without influence in turning Europeans away from the South, the fundamental and sufficient explanation of their preference for other regions is that the South offered them little opportunity to make a living. The great majority of the immigrants were dependent on their labor for a livelihood and the South did not afford them employment. There was little commerce and less manufacturing. The country lived by agriculture, and agriculture was carried on with slave labor. Gangs of Irish hands were sometimes engaged for the construction of public works; German merchants and artisans found a limited field in the towns; English gardeners were occasionally employed by the rich planters; but on the whole the demand for white labor in the South was exceedingly small. Wherever there were many Negroes, wrote Dr. Grund in 1846, the Germans were in a depressed condition, and found it hard to rise;² and the statement is equally applicable to other races. The possessor of a small capital was at an almost equal disadvantage as the laborer. Land, it is true, was cheap; but farming on a small scale was unprofitable and for a large plantation the purchase of slaves and stock required an outlay that few immigrants could consider. Peasant farming in the South before the Civil War afforded a miserable livelihood even to the native white man; to the unacclimated European it was apt to bring ruin. Many of the Germans who took up farms in Texas and Missouri, where conditions were more favorable to success than in the older states, were forced to give them up and seek homes elsewhere.³ The European immigrants could not compete with the Negroes as agricultural laborers and they could not afford to

¹ Jörg, *Briefe aus den Vereinigten Staaten*, 103.

² Grund, 3.

³ Jörg, 103.

purchase them as slaves; from the rural South, therefore, they were effectually barred.

The industrial contrast between the northern and southern states sufficiently accounts for the preference shown by immigrants for the former. Where commerce and manufactures flourished, where mines and railroads were being developed, or where hired labor was in demand for tilling the soil, there the newcomers found ready employment and an assured livelihood. Naturally, therefore, the states with the most diversified and highly developed industry were those with the largest foreign-born population. In 1850 no less than 55.58 per cent of the European immigrants were in the five Atlantic coast states from Massachusetts to Pennsylvania inclusive. This percentage fell with the industrial growth of the interior to 47.21 per cent in 1860 and 43.68 per cent in 1870.

No systematic attempt was made to ascertain the destination of immigrants, until the New York Board of Commissioners opened their offices at Castle Garden. Even the records that were then kept are practically worthless, for though the new arrivals were asked to declare their destination, their declarations were so often conditional and uncertain as to be meaningless;^{*} the Census Reports are therefore the best and almost the only source of information that rises above mere personal estimate with regard to the distribution of the foreign born.

Of the European immigrants before 1870 by far the greater part were Irish, Germans, and British, including under the latter term English, Scotch, and Welsh. Of all Europeans these three nationalities were 92.68 per cent in 1850, 91.29 per cent in 1860, and 85.55 per cent in 1870. These were, therefore, the races whose distribution chiefly concerns us. The Scandinavians, however, also deserve special consideration; for although numerically far inferior to the three races mentioned, their early tendency, especially on the part of the Norwegians, to settle in one region, gave them a peculiar and potent influence on the development of a definite section of the country.

^{*} Census of 1860, "Population," p. xxiii; *New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16th Annual Report*, 990.

The following table shows in percentages the geographical distribution of these races in 1850, 1860, and 1870. It shows that the three Middle states where there were no slaves received a far larger proportion of the European immigrants than any other region; namely, about two-fifths of the British, half of the Irish, and a third of the Germans. In New England were a fifth of the Irish, a tenth of the British, and very few other Europeans. To the West went nearly all the Scandinavians, something less than two-thirds of the Germans, more than two-fifths of the British, and less than a fourth of the Irish.

The foreign population of the Middle states included much of the best and the greater part of the worst elements. Men of exceptional ability in the trades as well as in the professions could aspire to a higher success in the older states than in the less developed region across the mountains. The prizes of life were greater, though more difficult of attainment; and ambitious men, if qualified to meet the severer competition found there, preferred to remain in the East. This accounts for the fact that before the Civil War it was said that a third of all the physicians practicing in New York city were Germans.¹ Scholars and artists of real merit, merchants with capital or credit, and skilful mechanics usually succeeded in the East and remained there.² This was particularly marked in the case of the English, Scotch, and Welsh, who as professional men usually possessed a more thorough training than was easily obtainable in America; while as laborers they were able to adapt themselves to American methods more easily than other foreigners,³ when indeed they were not actually the teachers of improved methods, as they became in coal mining and a number of other industries. With the Germans it was different. Well-trained and ambitious professional men and merchants with capital or influential connections preferred the eastern cities, and some from the lower walks of life remained as servants; but German artisans and mechanics could not compete with native workmen except at much lower wages, and they did not suit native employers so well

¹ Büchele, 420.

² Mooney, *Nine Years in America*, 92.

³ Grund, 10.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

THE FIGURES SHOW WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL IMMIGRANT POPULATION OF
EACH SPECIFIED RACE WAS TO BE FOUND IN EACH OF THE SEVERAL GROUPS
OF STATES INDICATED

		1850 Percentage	1860 Percentage	1870 Percentage
Connecticut.....				
Maine.....	}			
Massachusetts.....		10.84	10.30	10.93
New Hampshire.....		20.44	19.09	19.41
Rhode Island.....		1.20	1.56	1.65
Vermont.....	}	4.03	2.06	1.28
New Jersey.....				
New York.....		48.50	39.45	38.16
Pennsylvania.....		54.68	47.29	38.16
	}	36.03	32.91	31.41
		10.49	6.21	5.08
Illinois.....	}			
Indiana.....		21.30	24.60	24.43
Michigan.....		10.97	13.58	14.74
Ohio.....		32.55	31.08	31.28
California.....	}	21.80	18.94	22.38
Iowa.....				
Kansas.....				
Minnesota.....		9.55	14.07	15.24
Nebraska.....	}	2.99	8.14	10.11
Nevada.....		8.32	15.34	19.36
Oregon.....		54.70	65.10	63.64
Wisconsin.....				
Alabama.....	}			
Arkansas.....				
Delaware.....				
Florida.....				
Georgia.....	}			
Kentucky.....				
Louisiana.....		9.17	8.90	7.10
Maryland.....		10.60	11.24	8.57
Mississippi.....	}	21.56	16.85	15.24
Missouri.....		8.67	4.27	3.25
North Carolina.....				
South Carolina.....				
Tennessee.....	}			
Texas.....				
Virginia.....				
Arizona.....	}			
Colorado.....				
Dakota.....				
District of Columbia.....				
Idaho.....	}		2.04	3.72
Montana.....			0.63	0.92
New Mexico.....			0.38	0.62
Utah.....			3.42	4.37
Washington.....	}			
Wyoming.....				

as did the English and Scotch. Such of them as were able to do so therefore made their way to the interior.

In addition to these very desirable classes of settlers, there was a great multitude of aliens in the Atlantic states who were far below the American average of social efficiency. European criminals and paupers when landed in America usually remained for obvious reasons in the first populous city to which they gained access. There also remained a great body of honest but ignorant and unskilled laborers, men willing to work, but dependent on others for guidance and employment. The great number of these so impressed Toqueville when in America as to lead him to the mistaken conclusion that practically all immigrants were poor and bound to hire themselves out for wages, and that few of them therefore left the great industrial zone along the coast.¹

It is notorious that the greater part of this class was formed by the Irish. Of all the earlier immigrant races they reached America in the poorest condition, both physically and financially, and formed the heaviest burden the cities had to carry.² It is true that members of this race were prominent in the professions from an early date;³ it was common to find them as teachers in the "classical and mathematical schools";⁴ and among them were farmers of the better class possessing some capital, and practicing habits of thrift and economy.⁵ But the majority of them were very wretched and it was commonly said that in the first generation only four Irish families in twelve succeeded in America.⁶ Most of them were sprung from the lowest class of Ireland's rural population.⁷ In 1841 there were 491,278 mud cabins of one room enumerated in the Irish census; many of these were destroyed after the passage of the Encumbered Estate Bill some years later, so that in 1851 only 135,598 were left occupied. It was from the 355,689 displaced

¹ Straten-Ponthoz, 88.

² *U.S. Industrial Commission Report*, 1901, xv, 459, 462.

³ Mooney, 84.

⁴ Collins, 112.

⁵ *London Times*, September 24, 1851.

⁶ Collins, 77.

⁷ *U.S. Census of 1860*, Misc. Statistics, lv.

families that the emigration in the years following the famine was mainly composed.¹ In view of this it is not surprising that in the New York City almshouses in 1860 there were seven times as many Irish as Germans.² An inheritance through generations of improvidence, pugnacity, and addiction to strong drink long held them down in America. They were the least industrious and the least respected of the immigrants.³ They were strongly averse to going West. Experience with the miserable agriculture of Ireland, and dread of the unknown perils of the wilderness, robbed of all charm the cheap and fertile land of the interior. "They have an utter distaste to felling the forests and turning up the prairies for themselves. They prefer to stay where another race will furnish them with food, clothing, and labor; and are mostly found loitering on the lines of the public works, in villages, and in the worst portions of the large cities, where they compete with the Negroes—between whom and themselves there is an inveterate dislike—for the most degrading employments."⁴ Even before the great emigration caused by the potato blight and pestilence the Irish formed a shockingly large part of the population of our almshouses⁵ and city slums. In the thirties the sixth ward of New York was already known as a long-settled Irish neighborhood, notorious for crime and disorder.⁶ Their activity in party politics was displayed from an early date. A Federalist newspaper speaking of the Tammany Savage Society in 1814 says, "This society is principally made up of the faeces of the sewers of Ireland. . . . These aliens have been the great cause of our troubles and disgrace."⁷ The curiously modern tone of this item is absent from the proceedings of this society in 1819, when it circulated an address through the newspapers explaining the causes and suggesting the remedies for our national calamities; and, in spite of its Irish composition, passed

¹ *Census of Ireland 1851*, Part VI, p. xxiii.

² *Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor*, 1860, p. 49.

³ Büchele, 276.

⁴ *A.I.C.P. Report*, 1860, p. 50.

⁵ *Niles' Register*, XLIII, 223, 244, 257; XLVII, 198; XLVIII, 43, 62.

⁶ *Industrial Commission Report*, 1901, XV, 452.

⁷ *Herald of Liberty*, Augusta, Me., April 30, 1814.

resolutions pledging its members to practice frugality and patronize home industries.¹ A table showing the percentage of each immigrant race living in the four cities, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore reveals the strong tendency of the Irish to cling to the cities:

	1850	1860	1870
Irish.....	26.34	22.39	19.98
British.....	15.53	11.69	9.25
Germans.....	17.20	15.32	14.36

In 1870 the percentage of the immigrant races residing in the fifty largest cities was 44.53 for the Irish, 28.07 for the British, and 39.32 for the Germans. Such of the Irish as were found in the West and South usually went thither in gangs as hired laborers to be employed on railways, canals, or other public works.² Those that remained in the East performed the greater part of the rude and heavy work of domestic servants, porters, watchmen, builders, waiters, cabmen, boatmen, street workers, railway hands, and low-grade mill workers.³ In the opinion of an English traveler, though Americans spoke of them with contempt, as unfit for anything but the most menial offices, they were perhaps the most useful people in the country.⁴ In the second generation their position in the social scale was remarkably altered; and Henry Clay was justified in saying that they were amalgamated with Americans more quickly than any other aliens.⁵

In their tendency to go West the Germans and Scandinavians—more particularly the Norwegians—presented a strong contrast to the Irish. A larger proportion of these continental races possessed the means required to establish themselves in the interior; they arrived in relatively good physical condition; and having escaped the bitter agrarian experience of the Irish, their tastes led them in large numbers into rural life. Even the destitute among them frequently managed by thrift and industry to escape from the city

¹ Bishop, *History of American Manufactures*, II, 253.

² Cf. Immigration Commission, *Community Reports*, Grand Rapids, 14.

³ Mooney, 86, 142; Abbott, in *Journal of Polit. Econ.*, XVI, 27.

⁴ Fidler, *Observations on Professions . . . in the U.S. and Canada*, 143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

slums to a western homestead. The filthy and degraded German rag pickers, who composed the shanty population of the upper west side in New York after the Civil War,¹ as well as the Germans on the east side, were in large measure transient residents. "It is said that habits of economy and constant application to their wretched business enabled nearly all sooner or later to accumulate sufficient funds to remove to the West. We are told," says a committee of the New York Legislature in 1857, "of a colony of three hundred of these people, who occupied a basement, living on offal and scraps, and who saved money enough to purchase a township on one of the western prairies."² The little band of Norwegians that first went to Wisconsin in 1839 was composed of desperately poor people.³ For years the habitations of these and of many that followed them consisted, even for large families, of a "dug out" in a hillside, 12×18 feet in size, covered with sloping logs, unlighted, squalid, and dirty.⁴ The inevitable hardship of the early years in the wilderness, however, did not influence them, as it did the Irish, to prefer the condition of the eastern wage earner to that of the western farmer.

Before the extension and improvement of railway facilities, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the normal distribution of immigrants was greatly hampered by the difficulties of transportation.⁵ The three main routes to the interior in the first half of the century were from New York to Buffalo, from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, and from New Orleans to St. Louis.⁶ Before the opening of the state-built canals the journey was made on the northern routes in the heavy Conestoga wagons, which carried three or four tons; and it cost the traveler seven dollars a hundred-weight to transport his belongings from Philadelphia or Baltimore to the Ohio, and about the same from New York or Boston to the Lakes.⁷ Such wagons long remained the chief means of distributing

¹ *Report Ind. Com.*, XV, 457.

² *Report of N.Y. State Committee*, 1857.

³ Straten-Ponthoz, 162.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵ 43d Congress, Sen. Exec. Doc., 23, 166.

⁶ Dr. Grund, 98. ⁷ *Niles' Register*, XLVII, 133; Collins, 94.

settlers from the interior centers. In 1834 a traveler between Paoli and Vincennes counted 400 of them in a distance of sixty-five miles.¹ The opening of the Erie Canal in 1824 greatly facilitated western migration; and this immediately became and long remained the most popular route to the interior. By 1844 no less than 60,000 immigrants a year went West over the canal.² The traveler made the journey by steamboat from New York to Albany in ten hours; and from there he passed over the canal to Buffalo in seven or eight days.³ Though a great improvement on wagon transportation, travel on the canal was attended with many hardships. The boats were constantly overcrowded, and it was very common for those who had paid their passage to toil wearily after the boat on foot. The charge for carrying baggage was exorbitant, and immigrants were exposed to all manner of fraud on the part of ticket agents, and frequently experienced brutal treatment on the journey. These abuses were exposed by an investigating committee and somewhat mitigated by legislation in 1846.⁴ Greater improvement was due to the opening in that year of the first trunk line railroad to Buffalo, and the resulting competition for passenger traffic was much increased by the completion of other lines in 1853. The building of the railroads induced many Scotch and some other foreign farmers who had some money to settle in the interior counties of New York, which they preferred to the region farther west because of the easier communication with their friends.⁵ But to the great majority of immigrants, especially the Germans, the railroads were merely an easier means for western migration. They proved also a cheaper as well as a quicker means. In the fifties the average fare on an immigrant train from New York to Buffalo or Dunkirk was four dollars, and from New York to Chicago seven dollars; but tickets could frequently be purchased for a small fraction of the usual price.⁶ The time of the journey to Buffalo

¹ *Niles' Register*, XLVII, 163.

² Straten-Ponthoz, 87.

³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴ *N.Y. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16th Annual Report*, 970.

⁵ *Niles' Register*, LX, 112.

⁶ Büchele, 565, 572.

was scheduled as twenty-four hours from Albany, and thirty hours from New York, but the trains were very irregular. As late as 1873 an immigrant train often took four days to reach Chicago.¹

In 1845 the westbound immigrant who landed in Philadelphia took the railroad to Columbia, whence he made all the rest of the journey to Pittsburgh by canal except for some thirty-seven miles of mountain gorges which were traversed by rail. The fare over this route was six dollars with a charge of a dollar and a half a hundredweight for all baggage in excess of fifty pounds. The time of the journey was six or eight days, and the traveler paid for his meals.² From Baltimore at that time it was possible to go to Cumberland by rail, but there the traveler had before him a journey of a hundred and thirty-seven miles to Wheeling which must be covered by wagon; he usually preferred, therefore, to take the railroad to the Pennsylvania Canal.³ Ten years later nearly the whole distance from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was covered by rail at an average cost of four dollars and a half.⁴

As compared with the multitude of immigrants that passed over these northern routes, relatively few found access to the interior by way of Nature's greatest highway, the Mississippi River. The ships sailing from European ports to the Gulf were inferior to those bound for the cities on the north Atlantic coast, the voyage was apt to be several weeks longer, and the southern climate, except during the winter months, was reputed to be deadly to natives of the north and west of Europe. Furthermore, the journey up the river from New Orleans, though cheap, was neither safe nor agreeable to passengers of the lower class. It took a week or ten days to reach St. Louis at a cost of about four dollars,⁵ and during this time the immigrants were exposed to all manner of fraud and harsh treatment at the hands of the boat crew, the Negro traders, and the numerous adventurers who lived by fleecing travelers; they were poorly fed and were frequently compelled to do heavy work in taking on wood and handling the cargo.⁶ The accommodations

¹ 43d Congress, Sen. Exec. Doc., 23, 165.

² Straten-Ponthoz, 76.

³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴ Büchele, 573.

⁵ Straten-Ponthoz, 79; Jörg, 275.

⁶ Jörg and Büchele, *passim*.

were frequently inadequate; in selling tickets no thought was given by the agents to the capacity of the boats; and the lower class of passengers were liable to be crowded in with slaves or cattle, exposed to contagion, and subjected to great discomfort in a climate naturally debilitating to foreigners. At the same time, the recklessness of the steamboat captains was notorious, and serious accidents were frequent. In the forties it was estimated that a hundred and sixty-six lives a year were lost in the Mississippi and its tributaries.¹ In the first three months of the year 1852 there were thirty accidents on the river, killing a hundred and ten people.² Mississippi travel, picturesque and romantic as it is in retrospect, was a direful experience to the average British or German immigrant; and he that had tried it usually advised his acquaintances, if bound for the interior, to take the northern route from New York.³

Across the mountains, the chief distributing points were Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee for immigrants bound to the Northwest, and Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Cincinnati, and St. Louis for those intending to settle farther south.⁴ At all of these places were reproduced in a smaller way the conditions prevailing in the cities along the coast. Extortion, fraud, and browbeating were practiced to some degree; but as a rule immigrants possessing the energy and the means to reach the West were seldom so helpless and ignorant as were many of those whose journey ended in the Atlantic states. It is remarkable that most of the imposition on newcomers was at the hands of men of their own race.⁵ The Germans, for instance, were distinguished as "the Grays" and "the Greens"—expressions nearly synonymous with the terms "Long Horn" and "Tenderfoot," in the cattleman's parlance of a later day—and, with individual exceptions, the second class met with little consideration from the first. To each of the western towns came two classes of immigrants: one consisted mainly of laborers with some professional men and merchants who settled where work could be found, the other was made

¹ *Niles' Register*, LXXII, 348.

² Jörg, 217.

³ Jörg, 219, 259.

⁴ Straten-Ponthoz, 74.

⁵ Jörg, *passim*; *et al plur.*

up for the most part of landseekers who sought farms in the country. Most of the latter class had capital enough to establish themselves comfortably,¹ the amount necessary for that purpose being estimated at four hundred dollars on an eighty-acre tract.²

Before 1850 western travel was perilous and of uncertain cost. Access to Wisconsin and northern Illinois was cheapest by boat from Buffalo. The fare without food was apt to be about two dollars to Chicago,³ but it varied a great deal.⁴ In 1839 two hundred Prussians paid \$1,500 for transportation from Buffalo to Milwaukee;⁵ and the average cost was little less than that fifteen years later. Steamboats were apparently as unsafe on the Lakes as on the western rivers. On Lake Erie alone in 1845 thirty-six vessels went ashore, twenty more were total wrecks, four sank with all on board, and some sixty lives were lost.⁶ In 1850 three hundred and ninety-five people were lost on the lakes. In the following year there were two hundred and sixty-three boat accidents, but the lives lost numbered only seventy-nine—which was regarded as marking a great improvement in navigation.⁷ In the spring of 1852 two thousand westbound immigrants were held up in Buffalo by ice on the lakes. Most of them were forced to part with their tickets to buy food, and many were reduced to a condition bordering on slavery.⁸ After 1850 the growth of railroads more and more facilitated the distribution of immigrants in the West and an account of the routes and the charges after that date would involve the writing of a railroad history of the interior.

The immigrants who took up land in the interior developed five different systems of settling on it. The first was the Brotherhood or communistic village. Owen's ill-fated colony, founded in 1825, is a well-known example of such a settlement. Zoar under Bessler and Economy under Rapp both enjoyed in Ohio some years of prosperity before they were gradually deserted.⁹ In 1842 a band of Hessian Inspirirten founded Ebenezer near Buffalo; and two

¹ Straten-Ponthoz, 70.

² Smith, *The Settlers' New Home*, 106.

³ Mooney, 93.

⁴ Straten-Ponthoz, 89.

⁵ *Niles' Register*, LVII, 128.

⁶ *Niles' Register*, LXIX, 384.

⁷ Jörg, 218.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁹ Straten-Ponthoz, 107.

years later a small group of Swiss settled New Helvetia on the Osage River in Missouri. These and numerous similar settlements either followed the example of the old Moravian towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth in giving up communism except in the matter of church lands, or else they ended their precarious existence within little more than a generation. Some of them were the result of the religious and political oppression of former centuries; others grew out of socialistic theories; all of them appeared to be a physical and social anomaly in the United States.

The stock company, a second method of forming settlements, proved little more successful than the Brotherhood; for its administration entailed unnecessary expenses on the settler, and its restrictions hampered his energy. An interesting example of such a company was formed in England in 1841 to plant a colony at Gorstville, Wis. For each member there was an admission fee of two shillings and regular dues of a shilling a week. When a hundred dollars had been accumulated, an agent in Wisconsin purchased a hundred and eighty acres of government land, built a cabin, and cleared five acres. He then notified the managers in England, who sent out as many families as there were eighty-acre tracts available. On his arrival the settler found a house, five acres of cleared land and seventy-five fenced in, and the necessary implements and live stock. For all this he made to the company's agent a cash payment of fifty dollars, continued his payment of a shilling a week, and undertook to pay in addition twenty-five dollars a year for ten years. At the end of that term he received a deed to his farm in fee simple. These arrangements proved too complicated; the conditions were burdensome; there was general dissatisfaction with the house, stock, and implements provided, so that many refused to pay for them. Consequently in 1844 though seventy families had left Boston alone for Gorstville, there were only fourteen families living there.¹ Little greater success seems to have crowned the efforts of a company formed in Saxony about 1843 which purchased a hundred thousand acres of land in Tennessee with the intention of sending over colonists to raise Merino sheep.² In short, colonization and money-making proved no more compatible in the nineteenth century than they had been in the seventeenth.

¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

² Straten-Ponthoz, 185.

From time to time religious and philanthropic societies attempted to finance by subscriptions the settlement in the interior of poor people who were gathered from the cities of Europe or of the Atlantic coast. As a rule these quickly came to ruin because of the lack of business capacity of those planning them or because of the unfitness of the settlers. The experience of the German Adelsverein in Texas strongly discouraged subsequent attempts of the sort. Somewhat better success attended the town of Sainte-Marie in Northwest Pennsylvania, which was founded by the Roman Catholic Germans of Baltimore in the early forties.

Of all systems, however, perhaps the greatest danger attended that which for lack of a better name we may call isolated settlement. The land seeker who came over at his own risk, and not as a member of some company or association, encountered enormous difficulties. The majority of such immigrants came from Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsace-Lorraine, the Free County, Switzerland, and the small south German states. The Belgians tended to go to Ohio and Michigan, the Swiss and Rhine Germans to Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri. Without definite plans and accurate knowledge of conditions they furnished numberless examples of the greatest misery. Many grew weary of looking for a suitable place before they found one, and were induced by land speculators to invest their whole capital in some totally unfit farm, from which they were fortunate to escape with their lives. An extreme instance of such a practice was described by Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit*; and the essential truth of the description has been vouched for to the writer of these words by old people who knew the conditions through their own experience. It is of course not intended to imply that success did not attend some individuals and families who made the journey from Europe at their own risk and settled apart from acquaintances or members of their own race; but success in such a case was comparatively rare. Nor were all speculative enterprises misleading and grounded on false pretenses. The plan to build a city at Milwaukee was formed during the speculation frenzy of 1835, but the location was good and the plan succeeded. In 1840 the population was 1,712; in 1844 it had grown to 7,000, and its growth continued. By 1855 there were 20,000 inhabitants, about half of them Germans who at that time

occupied the lower, less healthful part of the city.¹ A German and an American speculator founded in 1831, Highland, Ill., a town that prospered and numbered five hundred inhabitants ten years later.² Similar instances might be multiplied.

The safest method of settlement in the interior was by groups or companies.³ It was thus that the Germans and Norwegians usually made homes for themselves,⁴ and their method accounts for the success that usually attended them. As a rule they got together in bands before embarking, and decided on the region to which they wished to go, basing their decision on the letters of friends already in America or on information furnished by the aid societies or state agents in the United States. Arrived in America, they waited long enough at one of the interior distributing centers enumerated above to complete their plans, and to send out trustworthy and discreet men to examine different localities. The Germans usually bought land direct from the government because of the clearer title thus secured; and the land thus purchased for the group as a whole was distributed among the individual members of it according to their ability to pay. This practice allowed each man to get what he could most readily afford to take, and was peculiarly advantageous to those that were not prepared to purchase forty acres, the smallest tract the government would sell. A good example of such a settlement was that founded at Westphalia, Mich., in 1837. Another group of Germans settled thus in Washington County, Wis., in 1838, and yet another at Calumet in that state during the following year. A similar band of Norwegians settled on Muskego Lake in Wisconsin in 1839; and though they were desperately poor, they prospered. Their number had increased to five hundred by 1843.⁵ Other Norwegian settlements soon followed.⁶ The Norwegians founded Kuskanong in 1842, and in two years no less than two thousand of them were living in that neighborhood.

THOMAS WALKER PAGE

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

¹ Büchele, 198.

³ Byrne, 25.

⁵ Straten-Ponthoz, 145.

² Straten-Ponthoz, 181.

⁴ Collins, 101.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.